

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for transporting sheets into a fixed image reading position, comprising:

a drive roller; and

a pad comprising a lower layer made of a flexible material and an upper layer disposed on the lower layer and made of a rigid material with a kinetic friction coefficient of 0.2 or less, the pad being biased to the drive roller so that only the upper layer contacts a peripheral surface of the drive roller to form a nipping region between the drive roller and the pad by a compressive deformation of the flexible lower layer of the pad,

wherein the pad is configured within the apparatus so that sheets traveling between the driver roller and the pad do not come in contact with [[the]] any flexible material that has a kinetic friction coefficient higher than the rigid material of the upper layer.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the lower layer of the pad has a compressive residual strain of 10% or less.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the upper layer of the pad is made of an electrically conductive material.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the lower layer of the pad is made of an electrically conductive material.

5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 4, configured so that an electrostatic charge generated by a contact between the upper layer and a sheet is discharged through the lower layer.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the pad is biased toward the drive roller by a spring.

7. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for transporting sheets into a fixed image reading position, comprising:

a drive roller;

a rigid backup portion comprising a top surface facing the driver roller;

a lower layer made of a flexible material and covering the entire top surface of the rigid backup portion;

an upper layer disposed on the lower layer and made of a rigid material with a kinetic friction coefficient of 0.2 or less; and

a spring which biases the rigid backup portion to the drive roller so that only the upper layer contacts a peripheral surface of the drive roller to form a nipping region between the drive roller and the upper layer by a compressive deformation of the flexible lower layer of the pad.